DEVOTIONAL READINGS.

DEVOTIONAL READINGS.

BEING

SELECT PASSAGES

FROM THE

SERMONS

OF

HENRY EDWARD MANNING.

FROME SELWOOD: JOHN HODGES.
LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL AND CO.
MDCCCLXVIII.

CONTENTS.

—o—

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

FROME SELWOOD:
PRINTED AND BOUND AT THE OFFICE
OF THE PUBLISHER.

DEVOTIONAL READINGS.

The Mystery of Man's Being.

IN the beginning of this Psalm (cxxxix. 14.) king David gives utterance to his wonder and awe at the mystery of God's invisible, universal presence. And from this he turns to his own individual nature. It is with hardly less of awe and wonder

that he muses upon himself. It was, indeed, by pondering upon the mystery of God's nature, that he learned to stand in awe of the mysteriousness of his own; by dwelling on the awful thought of the unseen Being who fills all things, and quickens all things, he came to understand that he too was a being of high descent, a mystery of God's almighty power, and that in the wonderful frame of his own bodily form there dwelt a conscious soul, whose eye was turned inwardly to gaze upon itself. Now, as this consciousness of what we are follows in a most certain order upon a true

knowledge, so far as man can have it, of what God is, so it is also a condition absolutely necessary to all true religion. There can be no real fear, or reverence, or seriousness of heart, until a man has come to understand, at least in some measure, what he is, that is, to realise his own awful structure and destiny.

We know, by instinct and by revelation, that God has made us in one respect like to Himself, that is, immortal. This bodily frame we look upon, although it is a part of ourselves, is but the least part; although it has its share in Christ's redemp-

tion, it is but the shrine of the redeemed spirit: we feel that a man's self is his living soul—the invisible, impalpable spirit, which comprehends all his being with an universal consciousness, and is itself comprehended only of God. It has a life in itself, which, embodied or disembodied, shall live on—outliving not the body alone, but the very world itself. All things visible shall decay; the heaven shall pass away like a scroll, the earth shall melt away under our feet; even now all things are hurrying past us, are dropping piece-meal, are dying daily; but we shall live for ever. We shall

rise on the heaving wreck of material things. All men, both good and evil, shall live on; all that ever have lived, live still; all are living in some unseen abode. In this life they were a mystery of mortality and immortality knit in one. They were in their season of trial; and their day ran out, their award was fixed, the mortal fell off like a loosened shroud, and the immortal spirit passed into the world unseen.

And, in the next place, we learn that our nature stands in a marked contrast to the divine; that the immortal nature which is within us is of a mutable kind, susceptible of the

most searching changes. God, who is immortal, is also changeless. He is "I am that I am," "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." In Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." But we, who, by His almighty power, are made immortal like Himself, unlike Him, are daily changing. We are susceptible of forms and characters stamped upon us from without; of habits and tempers of soul fixed by energies within. We grow, we decay, we fluctuate, we become what we were not, what we were we lose again; and yet we must be immortal. The most fearful

and wonderful of mysteries is man. To be mortal, and to be mutable, to be under the power of change and death, would seem, like the meeting of kindred imperfections, to be consistent; that we, who change daily, should change at last, once for all, from life to death, from being to annihilation, would seem like the carrying out of a natural law; and the last change to be like all other changes, save only in that it is the greatest and the last. But to be ever changing, and yet to be immortal; that after this changeful life ended, there should be life everlasting, or the worm

that dieth not,—bespeaks some deep counsel of God, some high destiny of man; something that is ever fulfilling, ever working out in us, whether we will or no.

And so, indeed, it is. We are here, upon our trial, for this end. We are sent into the world, that, by our own will and choice, we should determine our eternal portion. This is the moral design and purpose of Him that made us; and therefore He made us as we are—mutable, that we may take our mould and character; and immortal, that we may retain it for ever.

The Mystery of Sin.

PERHAPS there is no thought more awful than this: that sin is all around us and within us, and we know not what it is. We are beset by it on every side; it hangs upon us, hovers about us, casts itself across our path, hides itself where our next footstep is to fall, searches us through and through, listens at our heart, floats through all our thoughts, draws our will under its sway, and ourselves

under its dominion; and we do not know what it is. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness; nothing stays its advance; it passes through all barriers, pierces all strongholds; the very air seems to waft it into our dwellings. Now it is very awful to know this, and yet not to know what is this malign and deadly power. We read, that in the beginning sin was not in the world; that "by one man sin entered;" that here it has ever since abode; that it brought death with it; that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Thus much, however, we do know, that it is a will opposed to the will of God. A will which chooses the evil is a will opposed to the will of God. Sin, therefore, is a quality, or inclination, or posture of the will of God's creatures, at variance with His own; or, to speak less exactly, but more simply, it is a will opposed to His.

Consequences of the Fall.

BY the entering in of sin a change passed upon the world itself. I am not now speaking of physical evil, such as dissolution and death, and the wasting away of God's works, and the like; but only of moral evil. A change passed upon the condition of man. His will revolted, and transferred its loyalty from God to the Evil One. By casting off his obedience to God, he lost his

government over himself. So long as he was subject to the Divine will, he wielded an absolute power over his own nature. The passions and lusts of the flesh were then pure affections held in a bond of unity and subordination. When he rebelled against God they rebelled against man; and the bond of their unity being broken, they warred against each other, and his will was dragged away into bondage by each in turn. And by this it came to pass that he lost his innocence; the presence of God, wherewith he was encompassed, departed from him, leaving him naked; fear cast out love; from thankful he

became thankless; the lusts of the flesh soiled his spiritual being; his will caught the manifold taint of a world of evil; and through these dark avenues the Wicked One gained a free entrance into his soul. He lay open to incursions on all sides. There were as many breaches as there were impure affections. And thus man's will became one with the will of the Evil One; and was so drawn to it as to move with it; and became a part of the evil which entered into the world. Thenceforward man was the representative of the alien and antagonist power which had broken the unity of

God's kingdom; and his will was bent in a direct opposition to the will of God. Such, then, as I said before, is sin.

Adam, by sinning, forfeited his original righteousness,—the grace of God's presence, whereby he was sanctified: through loss of this gift his nature became faulty and corrupt; and through this fault and corruption inclined to evil. We are born with this fault and corruption, whereby we are by nature inclined to evil. The human will acting under the conditions of this inclination, tends universally and by its own free choice to fulfil the lusts

of the flesh, and becomes itself carnal; and "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" (Rom. viii. 8) wherefore, "it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." Such is our first birth into this world: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." And in this inheritance of evil we were passive and unconscious: the fault and corruption was in us before we knew that we were in being. Such as man made himself by the fall, such are we who are born from him.

Increase and Power of Sin.

THIS awful principle of sin has been ever multiplying itself from the beginning of the world. It so clave to the life of man, that as living souls were multiplied, sin in them was multiplied also.

Another remark is this, that as sin has multiplied in its extent, so it would seem also to have become more intense in its character. It is plain to all, that

(except, as I said, in penitents) the whole life of a man from birth to death is a deterioration. He is ever becoming worse. Time, opportunity, temptation, are necessary to quicken and unfold all that lies wrapped up in his birth-sin; and all these are ministered to him day by day. The faults of childhood grow into the sins of boyhood, and these grow vivid and intense, and burst out into the manifold guilt of after-life; and as the heart throws up new lusts continually, so the perverted reason complicates itself into crookedness and cunning. Who does not see that, except a man, day by

day, grow better, he must needs grow worse? Even they whose sins do not become more open and profligate, are nevertheless deteriorating. They grow impure in thought and will, if not in act; or hard, worldly, selfish, and unthankful; or irreverent and consciously alienated from God; or they live on in the world without love to God, and every year chills and deadens them more and more.

And if this be true of individual men, must it not also be true of all mankind? Must not the world, in its long life of six thousand years, have grown worse than it was in the begin-

ning? Has not the birth-sin of the world, so to speak, unfolded itself into the variety and energy of a fuller and maturer wickedness?

So subtil and far-spreading is the original sin of man, that no living soul is without a taint. The living powers of the first man fell under the bias of evil, and the same has more or less swayed every one since born into the world. There is no doubt that sin becomes more complex and energetic as time goes on,—that there is in the character of the world a law of deterioration, like that we see in the character of individuals. The original

sin was not a measured quantity, so to speak, of evil, which, like a hereditary disease, might exhaust itself in the course of two or three descents. Every several generation renewed it afresh; every several man reproduced it, and sustained the tradition of evil by example, habit, and license; it was perpetuated in races, in nations, in families; by custom, usage, and law.

There is a growth and accumulation of evil which in the life of the world is analogous to the deterioration of character in an individual man. It is plain that there have been four great ages of the world; that is, from Adam to

Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to the coming of our Lord, and from the coming of our Lord to this day. Scripture tells us that in the first three there was a declension from God. It foretells the same of the fourth, in which we live; and the history of Christendom already shews the partial fulfilment of the prophecy. From these great facts let us look to the laws on which they rest. These broad declensions of mankind are the direct and necessary consequence of the progressive deterioration of the individual character; the manifold inventiveness of sin; the universal con-

tagion of moral evil; the infinite multiplication and refinement in the forms of disobedience, arising from the interchange of personal or national corruptions; the accumulating power of tradition, which gathers up and embodies the characteristic sins of every successive generation, and creates a new moral world—a world of wrong and darkness and deceit—into which the next generation enters at its birth. Sin is born in us; and we are born into a world of its own creating. There is hanging between the soul of man and the realities of God, a veil wrought up of lying visions; upon it

are traced the dazzling forms which allure the sin that is in him to put itself forth in wilful acts of evil.

The Guilt of Sin.

IT was sin, that, so to speak, created the Cross; sin made a Redeemer necessary. It opened some deep breach in the order of life and in the unity of God's kingdom, which could be no way healed but by the atonement. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men:" —a new dominion was set up, where, before, God reigned alone. Out of the abyss

of the eternal world arose up some awful power, some strong necessity—the antagonist of God. One act of one man, the disobedience of one will, called up a whole world of rebellion, and let in all the powers of death upon the works of God. There could be no life in the world, when fallen, except by the atonement of the Son of God. And He, of His free choice and eternal love, gave Himself to die in our behalf. The Cross broke through these absolute and awful necessities, and henceforth "death and hell" are "cast into the lake of fire which is the second death."

(Rev. xx. 15). Here we may see the enmity of sin. If there had been no sin in the world until now, the sin we have committed, each one of us, this day, would have demanded the sacrifice of reconciliation. Such is the intensity of one offence; such its infinity of guilt. We may say, one by one, "Though there had been no sinner upon earth but myself, I should have created the necessity which nailed the Son of God upon the Tree. Though sufficient to redeem all the world, yet nothing less than His blood could redeem me alone. Infinite in price, His death is needed to

blot out my sin alone, which is infinite in guilt."

And, again, not only does sin both create and multiply this necessity, but so to speak, it continues to frustrate the work of the Cross and Passion of the Son of God. It demands His death, and it defeats its virtues: it invokes it from the mercies of God, and it wars against it by direct hostility: it first makes it necessary, and then would make it fruitless.

And, once more, sin makes men enemies of the Cross, because it is, in virtue and spirit, a renewal of the crucifixion. Wilful sins renew, in

virtue and by implication, the wounds that were suffered on Mount Calvary. And this reveals in us the true depth and measure of our guilt. By our offences we not only create the necessity for an atonement while we frustrate its effects, but we wound Him again, who, while we were yet sinners, died for us. It is then no mere figure of speech, but a very deep and appalling reality, that sin makes every soul that wilfully offends an enemy of the Cross of Christ, by converting it into a direct spiritual antagonist of the will and intent of our merciful Lord in the mystery of His Passion.

The Remedy for Sin: The Incarnation.

SIN and death had power in and over the personal nature of mankind. It was from this we had need to be redeemed. Though the laws of God's kingdom were never so fully satisfied, yet our nature would be our destruction: "to be carnally minded is death." The first sin, as it deprived Adam of the righteousness of grace, so by

consequence it threw his nature into corruption; and that corruption is derived to us; and is in every one born into the world; and infects the first motions of the will, which, as they pass through the lusts of the flesh, become biassed and distorted. Even though the kingdom of God had nothing against us, we should die, each one of us, by our own inherent mortality. No man could break the yoke of death from off his own neck; much less redeem mankind. Our very nature itself needed to be purged and restored to the conditions of immortality. There must be a

work of life counteracting the work of death, and propagating life throughout the race of mankind, as death has been propagated to us from Adam. And for this cause, the Person who should undertake the salvation of mankind must assume to Himself our humanity, that is, the very nature which He was to heal and to save; and put Himself into personal relation to us. So St. Paul argues: "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. ii. 14). We imposed on Him that necessity. The fall of our

nature was the producing cause of His incarnation: because we are men, therefore for us men and for our salvation, He was made Man.

So far as we can reason upon things the very terms of which transcend our understanding, it seems that the intrinsic necessities of God's kingdom, and of man's fallen state, require a redemption which is wrought by a Person who is able to fulfil the requirements of the Divine Law, and to perfect in Himself the redeemed nature of mankind. And what is this but the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation? which is, that the Word,

the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, took upon Him, not by way of nature, but of miracle, our manhood, "of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother, without spot of sin;" and in that nature He sanctified our humanity, fulfilled the perfect will of God, bare our sins in His own body, and by death destroyed him that had the power of death. That which as God He could not suffer, He became man that he might undergo. The impassible, eternal God was made flesh, that in the flesh He might endure all that sin had brought upon mankind. His Person was capable

of the whole mystery of the fall, sin only excepted.

It was necessary that he should partake of our very nature. Had He taken a body created, as in the beginning, from the dust, it would have been a like nature but not the *same*. It would have been a second creation of another and a new humanity; and His person would not have been partaker in the very flesh and blood derived to us from the first Adam, for the redemption of which the Word was made flesh. It was necessary that He should be united to us in our own humanity, that the grace

of His Incarnation might be communicated to mankind. God, who is the Origin of all being, the Creator of all things that are, does not destroy any work He once has made, but raises it from its fall, and heals it of its wounds and diseases. Therefore He took our very nature, that He might restore it in Himself to its original purity. That very humanity in which the first Adam was created is the same in which the Second was incarnate. There was no other way, than either to create a new nature, which would not be our own, or to restore the old, in which we are fallen and dead.

In taking our nature, He took it without spot of sin; for He took it not by the way of natural descent, but by a miracle, which broke through the transmission of the original fault. Isaac and John Baptist, though born by miracle, were, nevertheless, conceived and born in sin. Eve was made from the side of Adam; Adam was made of the dust; both by miracle and without sin. The second Adam was made by the operation of the Holy Ghost, of the substance of a pure virgin. He was born in a way of which our regeneration is a shadow, "not of blood, nor of the will of the

flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (St. John i. 13). And, again, from the mystery of the conception, that pure substance which He took was so united to His Divine Person that it was hallowed and sinless, in like manner as the flesh of Adam when God created him and filled him with His own Divine presence. From the moment of His birth every motion of His human soul and flesh was sinless and pure; every inclination of His will was holy. He had all the powers, affections, capacities of our nature, filled with more than original righteousness, with the holiness of God.

Yet He was very man, with all our sinless infirmities, susceptible of temptation, sorrow, hunger, thirst, weariness, solitude, weeping, fear, and death. And what are all these but properties of man by creation, not by the fall? They were in our first father before he sinned; and in them is no sin. In Christ man was exalted above the state of creation, and united to God by a bond of personal and substantial unity. The second Adam not only restored in Himself the losses of the first, but endowed the nature of man with new gifts of Divine perfection. "The first man was of the

earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven;" "the beginning"—that is, the *originating principle* and productive life of the new "creation of God." (Rev. iii. 14).

The Man Christ.

THE Word, who is by eternal generation of one substance with the Father, by the mystery of the Incarnation became of one substance with us. Unity of substance does not mean unity of person as the Socinians blindly say. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are in substance one, but in person distinct. Their personal distinctions are incommunicable; so that the Father is

not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. The word 'substance' expresses their common essence, excluding all personal proprieties, as paternity, filiation, and procession, by which each Person is distinct. And the word 'consubstantial' guards the distinctness of personality, while it affirms the unity of Godhead. So, to pass from the infinite to the finite, Christ took of the substance of the blessed Virgin. He thereby united Himself to the line of which Adam is the first father. The very substance originally created of the

dust, multiplied throughout mankind, and descending in the generation of four thousand years, was taken by the Son of God in the womb of His blessed Mother. His union with us is a consubstantial union. His substance as Man, and our substance, are one and the same. Here, then, we see one great spiritual fact, one great law and mystery, that between God and man there is a person who is both Man and God; consubstantial with the Creator and the creature, the finite and the infinite; that by one consubstantial unity He is God, by the other, Man.

In the mystery of the Divine Incar-

nation two whole and perfect natures were united in one person; the Godhead, with all attributes and perfections, infinite and eternal,—the manhood, with all its properties and powers of body, soul, and spirit. "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." All that makes up the natural perfection of man as a moral and reasonable intelligence, together with a passible and mortal body, He assumed into the unity of His person. It is only by bearing the whole truth in mind that holy Scripture can be rightly understood.

The Incarnation the Restoration of Humanity.

THE other great fact issuing from the last is, that as by this substantial union and personal distinctness the Son lives by the Father; so we, distinct in person, but partaking of His substance, live by the Son. He Himself hath said it. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." (St. John v. 26). And again:

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." (St. John vi. 57). As the union of the Father and the Son is not a figure or metaphor, an external relation or affinity, but a real, spiritual unity of substance; so our union with the Word made flesh is not figurative or metaphorical, by affinity and relation of will, or love only, but in substance, spirit, and reality. As the Son partakes of the Godhead of the Father, so we partake of the manhood of the Son: as He lives by the Father, we live by Him. Surely this great spiritual fact

is doubted by no one who does not also deny the truth of the Incarnation, or the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity. How can there be any union which is not real? or real union which is not substantial? "God is a spirit." Branches do not derive their life by a figurative engrafting, neither is the union of the trunk and the root a metaphor. The Incarnation is a real and substantial partaking of our manhood; and our union with Christ is a real, substantial partaking of His.

Our manhood, which in the fall of the first man was marred and sullied, He took in all its sinless

infirmities in will, conscience, and affections; and He bare it in all its measures and ages, of childhood, youth, and manhood. He hallowed it, and filled it with the Divine presence, and reconsecrated it to God. In it He died, and laid it in the rock, and bare it through the valley of the shadow of death; raised it from the dead; exalted it above the conditions of matter; of a natural body, made it to be a spiritual body; carried it upward to the holiest of all, and arrayed it in glory at the right hand of God. Such is the mystery of the Incarnation, as now perfected in the

kingdom of heaven. It is the restoration of our manhood to God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

In the mystery of the Incarnation is contained, therefore, the mystery of our renewal, in body, soul, and spirit, to the image of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the principle and power, and, as it were, the root of the new creation. We are so united to His incarnate nature, as to be incorporated and summed up in Him: we are made one with Him, as by our natural lineage we are one with the first Adam, the father of all flesh.

The Death of Christ; The Atonement.

WHEN we remember who He is that gave Himself, and for whom, and to die what death, we cannot find capacity of heart to receive it. As an intellectual statement it is easy to enunciate; but as a moral fact in our affections it is hard to realise: so deep is the mystery of love. If He had saved us by a new exertion of His creative will, it would have been a miracle of lovingkindness. If He had

spoken once more the first words of power, and created us again in light, it would have been a mystery of sovereign grace. If he had redeemed us by the lowliness of the Incarnation, still revealing Himself in majesty, though as a man, and lightening the earth with His glory, as Saviour, God, and King, it would have seemed to us a perfect exhibition of the Divine compassion to a sinful world. How much more when He came to suffer shame and sorrow, all that flesh and blood can endure, to sink, as it were, into the lowest depths of creation, that He might uplift it from its farthest fall!

There was no creature of God, as a creature, beneath His estate. Nothing but sin itself can sink lower than the Son of God. Of all men, as man, He was the last; "a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxii. 6.) He came to "lay down His life."

It was a distinct personal act, a deliberate choice, first made in His own will, then followed out in suffering to its fulfilment. He had, by the mystery of the Incarnation, obtained a price of greatest worth, of which He could strip Himself for our sake, ascertaining to us thereby, in some measure, by the

scales of a man, the love He bare to us.

He has laid a foundation which cannot be moved—His own death for us upon the Cross. Hitherto we have looked upon it only as a revelation of Divine love to us; now let us look upon it as a Divine atonement for our sin. How it is so, we may not eagerly search to know. That by death He has destroyed "him that had the power of death," (Heb. ii. 14.) and taken "away the sin of the world," is enough. In that death were united the oblation of a Divine person and the sanctity of a sinless man; the perfection of a holy

will and the fulfilment of a spotless life; the willing sacrifice of the sinless for the sinful, of the shepherd for the sheep that was lost, of life for the dead. How this wrought atonement for the sin of the world, we cannot say further than is revealed. God "made Him to be sin for us." (2 Cor. v. 21.) "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." "By His stripes we are healed." How the guiltless could take the place of the guilty; how the penalty due to our sin could be laid on any but ourselves, above all, on One who was sinless; and how such a translation of punishment could also translate us from the throng

of the guilty to the company of the guiltless; how the eternal Righteousness has been pleased to unite this atonement to His own changeless severity; how the iron link between sin and death has been broken through, and the power of both abolished,—and all this at once, by the death of a Divine and sinless Person,—must, at least in this our wayfaring on earth, be a mystery unsearchable, and a depth past finding out. We may, perhaps, be admitted within the veil in the heavenly kingdom; we may behold this secret of eternal justice in the vision of peace. But in this life, it is

enough for us to know that He hath tasted "death for every man;" that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Our Union with Christ by Baptism.

WHEN He ascended up on high, the virtues of His glorified manhood were shed abroad upon His Church. Through His holy Sacraments began a new line of spiritual generation. We are new born, or regenerated. We were made partakers of that manhood which is sinless, immortal; we are incorporated in that new creation, of which the second Adam is the head, the source, and the beginning. Therefore the Apostle calls the font of bap-

tism "the laver of regeneration." We can be born into this fallen world but once; and into the new world, which is the Church, but once. As, then, there is no second birth in nature, so no second regeneration. There is but "one baptism for the remission of sins." And as our birth is an isolated event, shut up within the narrow boundaries of the moment in which we enter into this fallen world; and therefore our after existence is not still called birth, but life, or living;—so is our new birth perfected at the font; and therefore our after life of faith is not called regeneration, as if spiritual

birth were a continuous fact, as if we could be always entering for the first time into the new creation of God, but our renewal.

There is evidently a correspondence, by way of analogy, between His miraculous conception and our regeneration through the Spirit. He took our nature not by natural descent, but by a miracle; we received, by supernatural operation in holy baptism, that thing which by nature we could not have.

Again: there is the same kind of analogy between the sanctity of our nature in His divine Person, and the sanctification of our person by the

grace of our new birth. The sanctity of His divine nature prevented in His humanity every motion of the reason, heart, and will. The whole inward nature of His human soul, with all its faculties, powers, affections, was filled and hallowed by the Godhead of the Eternal Word.

And such, in measure and proportion, it is the design of God that our regenerate life should be. We were born again in infancy, when we were passive and unconscious, for this very end, that before we became conscious and active, the preventing grace of God might begin its work upon us.

Baptismal regeneration is the very highest and most perfect form of the doctrine of God's free and sovereign grace, preventing all motions, and excluding all merit on our part. Strange that the jealousy which some profess for this great doctrine of the gospel does not make them of keener sight to discern it. If we were not passive and unconscious; if our will had begun actively and consciously to unfold itself, and follow its own inclinations, we should become at once sinners in act, and the natural resistance of our hearts to the grace of God would be aggravated and confirmed.

It is strange, I say, that they who rest all their theological system upon the sovereignty of God's grace should not perceive that its very highest and most perfect form is baptismal regeneration; and still stranger it is that, by a happy inconsistency, they act as if they had faith in that blessed truth which they profess not to believe; for we find that they universally address children with the words of divine truth, and set before them spiritual things, which can only be spiritually discerned.

Their practice is more pious than their theory. Indeed, it is seldom

found that they do not believe the regeneration of their own children, or something equivalent to it, call it by what name you will. But although they may break the full effect of an imperfect belief, yet it is not possible to be wanting in it, or in any measure to withdraw the thankful trust of our hearts from that mystery of grace, without serious danger, great forfeitures of blessing, and sometimes lamentable evils; for without a real and active faith in the grace of regeneration, there can hardly be a true view of the nature of the regenerate life. Accordingly we find the same persons incred-

ulous of the degree of illumination, conscientiousness, and self-government, of which children are capable. They treat them as imperfect beings, give them dangerous liberty, postpone the age of responsibility, make light of their early wildness, on the theory that it is inevitable, and may be recovered in after-years. They suffer the development of childish faults, and let their characters grow distorted, and their gait, as it were, to become artificial and faulty.

Our Regenerate Life.

In this the gift of life, which is by the Spirit of Christ, has more abundantly restored our original loss. By the regeneration of the Holy Ghost we are engrafted into the second Adam, very man, not frail and weak, but also very God, changeless and almighty. We are gathered under a Head which cannot fail; and are members of Him who hath revealed His own Divine Name: "I am—the Life." He has overcome both sin and death for us:

sin in the wilderness and upon the Cross, death in hell and in the grave; and He is gone up on high, above all created life, Creator Himself of all. Our Head, the second Adam, is in the throne of God, and Himself is God. We are consubstantial with the manhood of Him, who is consubstantial with the Godhead of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. We are united to God by a direct participation of Him who is both God and man; and are thereby "made partakers of the Divine nature." (2 St. Peter i. 4.)

We were united to Christ by the presence of the Holy Spirit from our

Baptism. There has never been a moment from the first dawn of consciousness, from the first twilight of reason, and the first motions of the will, when the Spirit of life has not been present with us. He has created in us the first dispositions to truth and holiness; every good desire was from Him. He has prevented us in all good intentions, restrained us in all evil. He has, as it were, beset our whole spiritual nature, and encompassed us on all sides, guiding us into the will of God. From the Spirit of Christ we received not our will,—for that was in our nature,—but every good incli-

nation. If only we yield our will to Him, His power shall be ours: and by His help, every sin of the soul is broken through, and we are set free; not by our own power, not by our own will; though it be still with our own act, willingly and freely. This is the office of the Holy Spirit in all our sanctification. He first inspires thoughts, inclinations, desires, intentions of holiness. He goes before, leading the way; winning us on by soft inward persuasions and by a sweet sense of God's will; giving us, with a holy will, also a power above our own. The working of the Spirit is, so to speak,

co-extensive with our whole moral being. He presides over all the springs of thought, word, and deed: by His gracious Presence endowing us with power and will to mortify sin, and to live in holiness. And this gift of the Spirit of holiness is itself the gift of life.

Our new life and calling in the Church.

THIS leads to the true meaning of the words, "the manifestation of the sons of God," and "the glorious liberty of the children of God." They mean the state of the regenerate, on whom was shed abroad the spirit of adoption; that is, the members of Christ's mystical body, who were taken out of the dead world, and grafted into the living Church; over whom sin and death had no power of condemnation. In many

places of the New Testament, the great grace of the Gospel is declared to be the adoption; that is, the grace and state of sonship.

And this explains also the meaning of the word 'regeneration,' which St. Paul uses of Baptism. It is the grace of the new Birth, "the laver of regeneration," the being "born of water and of the Spirit." By our blessed Lord it is used also of the resurrection, when the work of regeneration shall be made perfect by the redemption of the body. "Ye that have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory,

ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel:" (St. Matt. xix. 28.) for our salvation is all one work, beginning at our baptism here, and carried on to the day of the resurrection, when all shall be made like Him, by the vision of Himself.

Upon us who have been called this work is already begun. We are united to the Son of God, and are made partakers of His life, death, and resurrection. All that He has accomplished in His own Person is made ours by the free gift of God. The whole Church in the world is a new creation, rising up out of the old: sin and death, that

is, the gates of hell, cannot prevail against it. The powers of the fall are turned back again upon their original source: against the Church of Christ they have no power. It is the justified body of a righteous Head; the immortal brotherhood of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. We are "no more servants, but sons;" (Gal. iv. 7.) no more in bondage, but in "the glorious liberty of the children of God." Such is our state as Christians.

See, therefore, how high is our calling. We are incorporated with the city of the living God. It is all around us even now; we are within its walls,

builded upon the apostles and prophets, encompassed by a cloud of witnesses. It is the city of refuge from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Many generations of its citizens have overcome, and are gone on before, ascending up on high. There is pledged to you as sure a mastery over all these enemies and powers as to them. They have won their crown; but yours, too, is sure. They who are now entered into rest, a little while ago were sinners and tempted; then penitents, now resting and crowned. Their earthly warfare has received its complement and fulness: what they strove to be, they are.

They who prayed for humility are humble; for meekness, are meek; for purity, are "pure, even as He is pure." They who desired to know the truth, now see God, the Truth, uncreated, eternal. Remember this in all your temptations, doubts, and perils. When you are afraid, when you are ready to give way, when sluggish unwillingness weighs you down, and to persevere unto the end seems to be impossible,—then remember what they were who have entered through the gates into the city. The very same bliss is pledged to you: a spirit perfect as the Spirit of Christ, when He shall change your vile

body, that it may be like unto His glorious body. They whom you have yielded up, are only parted for awhile. They have gone up, after their mortal toil, and are resting now, laid up for the morning of the resurrection.

Faith the Principle of Christian Life.

THERE may be living and habitual conversation in heaven, under the aspect of the most simple, ordinary life. For on what does it depend but on these two things; on faith, which keeps alive the consciousness,—or, if I may so say, the vision of the city of God; and on the obedience of our heart to its laws of love? And what are faith and obedience but realities of the Spirit, which all who desire may attain?

The greatest mysteries of Christ's kingdom, like the highest laws of creation, are the broadest and largest in their range. The communion of saints, the consciousness of Christ's Presence, and of our fellowship with all who are united with Him, is an article of our Baptismal faith; and may be, therefore, universal. It is not the intellectual and the contemplative, the retired and highly favoured, alone, who may converse with the heavenly city, and have fellowship with all who dwell in it. We live too little in the presence of the world unseen. Even religious minds are too little conscious of it. If

some high mountain rose above our dwelling, we should never pass our threshold, or look abroad, without seeing it. The first lights of the morning would fall upon it; the last glow of evening would redden it; all day long the sun's heat would burn upon it; all our distances would be measured, all our paths guided by it. Such to the eyes of faith is the Mount Zion which is in heaven. It hangs over us, and we dwell upon its base. If only our eyes were open, as those of Elisha's servant in Dothan, we should be more conscious of our heavenly fellowship than of our earthly friends.

With them would be our true home; the only world of reality; our only abiding rest. This would be the universal consolation of every member of Christ; the secret stay of souls under burden of this weary world. Wheresoever we be, we may look upward, and see "Jerusalem which is above," "the mother of us all." When we kneel down, it, as it were, descends, and we enter into it; we pass through its open gates, and fall down even before the presence of the King. But at all times, even the busiest, and in all lawful ways, even the most crowded by the world, we are still within its shelter and its

sphere. A holy life is its very gate. And let us always remember that holiness does not consist in doing uncommon things, but in doing every thing with purity of heart. It is made up of relative duties and of habitual devotion. Such works of faith, patience, and charity, as our life admits, even to the very lowest state may be sanctified.

Salvation a Difficult Work.

Man's unwillingness.

IT is manifest that there is in man's nature a deep and settled unwillingness, which is the first and greatest barrier to his salvation an unwillingness not simply to be saved, that is, to be made everlastingly blessed—this, as a mere end of their desires, all men long after—but an unwillingness to be

saved in the way of salvation which God has ordained. They would fain enter into the strait gate, if they could do it without repenting, or denying self, or crossing their own will, or changing their way of life. If they might live on the very threshold of His kingdom with an unchastened heart, and then, without struggle, shed off the unmortified body of sin and death, and enter new-born into His joy; if, after a life of self-indulgence, they could inherit eternal bliss, and so draw out the indolent, self-pleasing luxury of earth into the perfect blessedness of heaven,—then, indeed, there would

be no unwillingness; then the way of life should be broad enough, and many should go in thereat; and the way of destruction narrow, and few should there be that find it. But because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is the severe holiness of salvation from which they shrink. They know that salvation is, the being saved from sin, from its guilt and from its soil, from the power with which it rules over us, from the love with which we cling to it;—in a word, it is the healing of the soul; the cleansing of its deadly sickness; the making of the sinful creature a holy being. From this men shrink

by the recoil of their natural will. They too clearly see that it is from themselves that they must be saved; from what they love and pamper with perpetual license; that they must renounce what they are, and become what they are not; that they must absolutely submit their will to be changed and subdued to His will;—and they are not prepared to put so great a yoke upon themselves. And, besides this, the thought of God's awful and searching presence, all pure, all holy, is insufferable. They feel the awful contrast of their own sullied spirits with His spotless sanctity; and they can

neither endure to forsake the sins they doat on, nor dare to draw nigh Him without repentance.

Outward Temptations: The Devil.

THE entering in of sin proves the presence of an Evil Being. We talk of powers, and qualities, and oppositions, and the like; but we are only putting words for realities. They do not exist apart from beings create or uncreate; they are the attributes and energies of living spirits. Sin entered in through and by the Evil One; that

is, the Devil. There is working in the world something which is not of God. For wise ends, God suffered this rebellion to smoulder in His kingdom. For some unsearchable purposes of wisdom, He has, by the entering of the Evil One, permitted the unity of His works to be troubled, and the harmony of His creatures to be marred. It is most necessary for us ever to bear in mind the personality of Satan; for we are often wont to speak of sin, as we do of sickness or plagues, as if it were an impersonal thing; and we thereby lose all distinct perception of his power, deceitfulness, and malig-

nity. Let us always remember that there is, in the world, as it were, a new law, opposed to the law of God; and administered by an Evil Being, who has entered and gained a hold in God's creation, and is therefore called "the prince of this world," (St. John xiv. 30.) "the prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.)

This temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ lays open to us the reality and nature of our own. It lifts the veil which is upon our eyes, the unconsciousness which is upon our hearts, and shews us what is really going on

at all times in the spiritual world around us; by what we are beset, and what are the mysterious powers which are exerting themselves upon us. Much that we never suspect to be more than the effect of chance, or hazard, or the motion of our own minds, or the caprice of fancy, may be the agency of this same awful being who tempted both the first Adam and the Second. There is something very fearful in the thought that Satan, whom we so slight or forget, is an angel—a spiritual being of the highest order—endowed therefore with energies and gifts of a superhuman power; with intelligence

as great as his malice; lofty, majestic, and terrible in his fall. Next to the holy angels, what being can it be more fearful to have opposed to us, and that with intense and vigilant enmity, and at all times hovering invisibly about us?

The World.

WE will pass to another kind of state. I mean, the state of those who love the pleasures, rank, honours, riches, refinement of the world. These things, free as they are from necessary evil, are among the most subtle and tenacious snares. Unnumbered souls perish in their meshes. Thousands struggle in vain to get beyond the sphere of their attraction. But their power of allurement is only less than the power of the Spirit of God: far

too great for the infirmity of man. It is wonderful how fast worldly people are held; how the world embraces them, and weaves its arms about their whole being. And the world has them for its own with a quiet and unchallenged possession. No drawings of Christ's truth or Spirit make them waver or vibrate for a moment. The game is up, and their spoil before them. They plunge deeper and deeper into the manifold and multiplying attractions of the world, until their freedom of action is stolen from them, and their will ceases to be their own.

Much trading, or much toiling for

advancement, or much popularity, or much intercourse in the usages and engagements of society, or the giving up of much time to the refinements of a soft life,—these, and many like snares, steal away the quick powers of the heart, and leave us estranged from God. And this is the secret of the oppressive weariness which people who live in the world feel in all holy duties. The acts of religion, such as reading, thought, contemplation of the unseen, prayer, self-examination, the fasts, feasts, and offices of the Church, first seem to lose their savour, and are less delighted in: then they grow irksome,

and are consciously avoided. So it must be. When religion ceases to be a delight, it becomes a yoke. Serve God we must, either in freedom or in bondage; if not for love, then for fear. If we love the world, we shall only fear God. We shall turn to our profession or our calling, or to society, or to our pleasures in life, with speed and gladness, but to God with constrained prayers and reluctant confessions. We shall go to Him with distant and equivocating hearts, and turn from Him with a secret readiness which makes us tremble. How awfully do people deceive themselves in this

matter! We hear them saying, "It does me no harm to go into the world: I come away, and can go into my room and pray as usual." Oh, surest sign of a heart half laid asleep! You are not aware of the change, because it has passed upon you. Once, in days of livelier faith, you would have wept over the indevoutness of your present prayers, and joined them to the confession of your other backslidings; but now your heart is not more earnest than your prayers, and there is no index to mark the decline. Even they that lament the loss of their former earnestness do not half know the real measure

of their loss. The growth of a duller feeling has the power of masking itself. Little by little it creeps on, marked by no great changes, much as the dimness of the natural sight, which must reach to an advanced point before it is detected to be more than a passing film. And so the inward affections lose all their freshness, and the pure light of the heart is overcast, and its love towards God grows cold. The mind is excited, and its feelings and powers drawn into life and play on every other side; but in the region which lies towards God it is black and lonely; and the faint gleams of heavenly love,

which must be fed by insights of the world unseen, flicker and decay in the unwholesome neighbourhood of worldly affections.

And, further than this, we may take an example which comes nearer to ourselves. It is not only the greater sins, or the worship of the world, which hold us back against the drawing of Christ; but the soft pure happiness of home, the easy round of kindly offices, the calm and blameless toil of a literary life, the gentler and more peaceful influences of earthly cheerfulness:—all these too, with the lights and shades, the anxieties and joys which fall across

an even path, steal away the heart, and wind all its affections about a thousand moorings. Happy men drop their anchors into the quiet waters of life; the very smoothness of its surface lulls them, and a conscious innocence makes them fearless. The warmth, pulse, and tide of life sets towards the visible objects of affection. This is a state in which it is hard to die. They are little prepared, either for so great a wrench, or for so high and awful a meeting with their Lord and Judge.

The Flesh.

THROUGHOUT holy Scripture we are taught that the flesh which we bear the is occasion of disobedience. I say the occasion, because it was not originally the source. The temptations of sin passed through the flesh as their avenue of approach; and sin, when committed, deposited its evil in our mortal body. Therefore the flesh in holy Scripture is spoken of as the prin-

ciple of disobedience and the source of temptation. It is surely impossible for any one to reflect at all without perceiving the relation which exists between the habit of the body and the condition of the mind; between the workings of the flesh and the qualities of the soul. Besides these self-evident proofs, which the one word sensuality will suffice to shew, is it not manifest that the sins of anger, pride, hardness of heart, indolence, sloth, selfishness, are so closely related to the body, that it is hard to say where they chiefly dwell, whether in the spirit or in the flesh? Does not the universal language of mankind

connect them together? Does not the natural instinct of discerning the characters of men by outward tokens prove to us that, whether we will or no, we do associate the bodily and mental habits of men together? Does not a free, or a soft, or excessive course of life insensibly affect the whole character? Is not the tradition of mortification as universal as that of sacrifices, pointing to a truth to be afterwards revealed in the gospel? And what do all these things prove, but that the body, or, as holy Scripture says, the flesh, is the occasion, the avenue, the provoking, aggravating,

sustaining cause of moral and spiritual evil in the soul? that it kindles and keeps alive the particular affections which, when consented to by the will, become our personal and actual sins?

What constitutes sin.

IT is no sin to be tempted; nor is our being tempted any proof of our being sinful. This is a most consolatory thought; for among the afflictions of life few are so bitter and perpetual as temptation.

Nothing can convert a temptation into a sin but the consent of our own will. This one principle, clearly seen, is a key to nine-tenths of all questions of conscience on this subject. The worst of temptations, so long as they are without our will, are no part of us: by consent they become adopted and

incorporated with our spiritual nature—thoughts become wishes, and wishes intents. Consent is the act of the whole inward man. So long as we refuse to yield, it matters little what temptations beset us; they may distress and darken, and even for a time seem to defile our hearts: but they cannot overcome us.

Satan has no power over the will of man except through itself. It must be won by self-betrayal, or not at all. This is absolutely certain, and lies at the root of the distinction between obedience and disobedience, holiness and sin.

Our refuge in temptation.

LET us take two very simple practical rules.

One is: when we are tempted by any approach of evil, to fix our eyes inwardly upon Him hanging upon the Cross. Let us then call to mind His five wounds, and His crown of thorns. This will abate our pride, break our will, and cast out our evil thoughts. If the temptation be strong and abiding, keep your eyes upon Him until

you are delivered. Look upon Him, as upon the true Serpent of brass, till the fever and the poison of your sin be healed. Go, if you can, into some secret place, and kneel down in His sight; and, there, stay upon your knees till the sting of sin is allayed, and the temptation passed away.

The other rule is: to pray, day by day, that our will may be crucified with Him. This prayer, if we persevere, will, by His grace, slay the enmity that is in us, and make us, not enemies, but lovers of His Cross. St. Paul says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affec-

tions and lusts;" (Gal. v. 24.) and again, he says still more, "I am crucified with Christ;" (Gal. ii. 20.) This shall be even our state at last. Happy and blessed are they who are dead to themselves, alive to Him alone. Let us, therefore, pray Him so to unite us to the spirit of His crucifixion, that we may die to sin, to the world, to our own will; to all that flatters, fosters, strengthens the love of ourselves. As in Baptism we were signed with His life-giving sign, and charged to fight manfully under His banner, so let us pray, that in life and in death we may be under the shadow of His Cross.

Howsoever He may fulfil this prayer, be not afraid. It may be He will send you sickness, or sorrow, or contradiction of sinners, or suffering of some kind. For your prayer is an appeal to His Passion. He may suffer you to receive the stigmas which the world printed on Him. Be it so. Let come what may, if only we have upon us the mark of our crucified Master at that day when the sign of the Son of Man shall appear, and the angels "shall gather His elect from the four winds of heaven."

Dangers Within: Self-Confidence.

BEWARE, then, of an easy, acquiescing temper, which lulls you to be secure. What is meant by "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction," but that a man needs only to follow his own will; only to let his thoughts, words, and lusts wander and run on unchecked, and he is in as fair a way to perish, as a ship

without a helm in a flood where there is but one haven and a thousand shoals? By a natural law man leans towards destruction. It may be called the gravitation of a fallen being. Let a man only be at ease in himself, satisfied with what he is, and consent to the usurping customs of the world, drawing in the unwholesome breath of refined evil, and letting his moral inclination run its natural course, without check or stay, and he will most surely tide onward, with an easy and gentle motion, down the broad current of eternal death. Such a man is seldom strongly tempted. The less marked

solicitations of the tempter are enough. The suggestion of a great sin might rouse his conscience, and scare him from the toils. We may take this, then, as a most safe rule, that a feeling of security is a warning to be suspicious, and that our safety is to feel the stretch and the energy of a continual strife.

Spiritual Pride.

THIS kind of pride, shews itself in many ways. Sometimes in the pride of strictness, that is, in rigour of observance and regularity; in a sort of Christian Pharisaism, which leads to want of tenderness, and of condescension towards the weak, penitent, and poor; to uncharitable judgments, and separation from brethren; though this, perhaps, is the least injurious sort of spiritual pride, because it is the most open and visible, the most human and material, if I may say so. There is a far worse kind, which, instead of

building itself upon regularity, sets itself up upon disobedience. It does not take a system out of itself for its support; but rears itself upon itself; upon the conceit of its own sufficient strength. It is its own centre and its own foundation. This is the pride which owns no rule of interpretation but its own judgment, or its own private spirit; or, what is more dangerous, its own supposed illumination. Such spirits make it a point of piety to be superior to legal appointments and carnal ordinances; to Catholic tradition, general councils, the visible Church, the Christian

priesthood, the order of Divine worship, the matter of the Holy Sacraments. In a word, they will be found, at last, to own no revelation but their own thoughts of God, no Church but themselves. Little as such people think it, they claim to be inspired; to be prophets, except that their predictions are not verified; to be apostles, except that they neither labour nor suffer for the Gospel of Christ. It may be said, that this is an overcharged picture. Granted that it is a full-length exposure of the spirit which relies upon itself, conforms to the Church as a thing indifferent, and

calls the Holy Sacrament an ordinance. But it is the same spirit, differing only in degree. The common forms of it are, of course, fainter and less pronounced. Outward conformity to the order of the Church, arising from custom or private relations, masks this fault in many characters. In them it shews itself chiefly by slighting the grace of God in humbler souls, and by esteeming obedience to the Church, formality; fasting, self-righteousness; and faith, superstition. What fellowship has such a temper with Him who received a sinner's baptism in Jordan, and washed His disciples' feet?

Presumption.

If any thing can be more dangerous than this, it is the presumptuous way in which men give largess of God's mercy, and encourage sinners to believe themselves to be forgiven before they are penitents, or to be penitents before they have more than entered on the threshold of repentance. What can be more unreal and misleading than to press on men the belief that they are

forgiven, when their whole soul cries aloud that they have not repented; or to persuade them that their sins are blotted out, if only they can bring themselves to believe so? as if self-persuasion, without contrition of heart, were a full remission of sins. What antinomianism, what superstitious reliance on forms and rites, what blind seeking to charms and divinations, can be farther than this from the forgiveness of the Gospel?

Despondency.

WHERE is the man that does not feel a conscious oneness with his former guilty self? Who does not feel within the smiting of conscience, the vivid recollection of past sins, with all their colour and aggravation; how he tempted the temptation, how he courted the sin, how forgot his resolutions; or how he remembered his prayers, but sinned against them; how he knew his own peril, but betrayed himself? Who

does not feel himself at times haunted by the self of other days, which seems to rise up as a spirit of darkness, and cast a spell upon him, and fix him with its eye? It fascinates him, so as almost to draw his gaze from Christ. In such a time it is hard for a man to believe that he is indeed a new creature. And still the more when the power of old habits, and the strength of old temptations, seem for a time to prevail: when, even in the holiest seasons—in prayer and in the holy Eucharist—thoughts once pampered and familiar thrust themselves unbidden now into the abode where they were wont to be

welcomed before. Sometimes we are all but driven to believe; Surely I am unchanged; old things lie heavily upon me, and crush the very life of my soul. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

We must be made partakers of the humiliation of Christ; and therefore we are left girded about with the burden of our fallen nature. It is by learning the depth of our fall, and of the evil that dwells in us, that we are to be fully abased. We must "drink of the brook in the way" or ever He will "lift up" our "head." Therefore God suffers weaknesses and infirmities

to cling about His holiest servants, even as He suffers them to bear a dissolving body to the last. Great is the mystery of our humiliation; even sin, for which we are abased, is overruled to perfect our abasement; and, besides this, our faults and weaknesses are left about us for our purification. The cleansing of spiritual evil is a deep and searching work. Our weakness and faults, therefore, are left to abide in us, that we may learn the perfection of hating what God abhors. They are as a purifying fire, eating through us with a sleepless pain and an anguish which cleanses the soul. When God

shews to us the inner depths of our spiritual being, leading us as He led His prophet of old, through chambers hallowed to Himself, but defiled by secret abominations, He reveals to us a mystery of fear and sorrow which has nothing like it on this side of the grave. Nevertheless, let us pray of Him to shew us all. If we would be safe, we must know the worst.

Declension.

ANY measure of declension from our baptismal grace is a measure of that same decline of which the end is, a hopeless fall from God. Surely, the first symptoms, all slight though they be, of a pestilence which is beyond the skill of healing, must needs be greatly feared. Such are small sins, slight tamperings with the edge of conscience, half unwilling returns to forsaken evil, passive re-admission of once-banished faults; all these are the

first beginnings of an impulse and direction which leads to a settled determination of the heart from God. Every day the deposed powers of evil steal back, and re-assert their dominion; first, a failing, then faults, then a sin, then a mingled throng of lesser acts of disobedience—willed, not done, because, though longed for, not as yet ventured on; and so the whole character recoils in all its parts from God. How often do we see such examples in those who have been brought to better thoughts by a sharp and threatening sickness, or by a heart-breaking cross in life, or by a cutting sorrow; and

yet afterwards, in the restored buoyancy of health or heart, have inwardly declined from the warmth and sincerity of their better resolutions! It may be they were earnest for a long season, and moved on a higher level, had loftier aspirations, purer joys, and keener sympathies. But, after all, by slight relapses, they sunk back, and grew commonplace, and ended in a low, dull, dubious life, upon the very boundaries of wilful disobedience.

There are two things which God hates—backsliding and lukewarmness; and there are two which He will avenge—an alienated heart, and a will

at war with His. Who can foretell what forfeiture of blessings, what withdrawal of grace, what clouding of the conscience, what hiding of God's countenance, what weakness, what confusion of soul, may be the righteous chastisement of a secret falling away of the heart from God?

Self-excuse.

NOTHING so wears down the sharpness of conscience, and dulls its perception of our actual state, as self-excusing. It is the most certain way to forfeit all true knowledge of ourselves; it directly fosters and strengthens the faults we are attempting to excuse; it weakens the corrective powers of religion, the first and chief of which is a sincere confession of every swerving of the will from God.

From this there can nothing come but a declining of heart, and an estrangement of the sore and irritable mind. And these things draw a darkness over the conscience, which hides the face of God. A little while ago, and such men were warm and forward in religion, now they feel chilled and backward; for a justified fault is a harboured canker, and the repulsion of an alienated will thrusts them away from God.

Hidden Sins.

WHAT is more common than to see men characteristically marked by some one sin, which they pointedly censure in others, and from which they believe themselves to be absolutely free? It has almost become a proverb, that a man's besetting sin is that one sin which every body knows but himself. We find this, of course, in its broader and grosser forms among worldly and

indevout people; but it is equally, though more secretly, true of persons in the main religious. What is more common than to say, "How wonderful it is that such a person cannot see what every body else knows; that he should sincerely believe himself to be not so much as tempted to faults which manifestly govern his whole mind?" These unsuspected sins are almost universally the faults of childhood and early youth, which have become habitual and unconscious: for instance, personal vanity, selfishness, a difficult and disputatious temper, impatience, resentment, unreality, and the like.

And they who have these faults in them by long habit, generally excuse themselves by ascribing the same to others on whom they have inflicted them; as if the wind should chide the roughness of the sea for disturbing its repose, all the while believing itself to be at rest.

We see also how it is that so many are overcome. Because they have armed themselves only in part. There is something wanting in their moral habit; some sin unmortified; some lust still living and importunate; or there was some neglect in their rule of devotion; in prayer or confession, or

reading, or meditation, or self-knowledge; something left undone which leaves them naked in the day of battle.

Let us, then, search our hearts day by day, and see what it is which hides Him from us. If we have never yet seen Him by His promised illumination, it is a sign that something in us must still be cleansed away. Morning and night let us seek it out; convicting our hearts by the perfection of His heart. There are two sure ways to keep the soul clear from conscious sin: the one is, uniform obedience; and the other, prompt confession. Let us suffer nothing to harbour and fester in

our hearts, but at once cast it forth at His feet by a pure and penitent confession. Even sins of the lighter kind, of thought and temper, if they are allowed to linger, make up by duration what they want in magnitude. They taint and estrange the heart, and make us shrink from His presence, until we have confessed them. This is the remedy of our imperfect service and our many infirmities. We may cast them all out before Him as our sorrows and our burdens, and He will not impute them to us. It is specially to hearts cleansed by confession that He shews Himself by His inward coming.

Mary at the tomb is the pledge of His appearing to sinners who are penitents. And who can fear or shrink from laying open their hearts to such miraculous love, or of speaking the worst of themselves at the feet of His absolving pity?

Old Faults and New.

IT is certain that in the course of a religious life sins gain an entrance with inconceivable subtilty. Just as we contract slight peculiarities of manner, tone, or gait, without knowing it, either in the course of acquisition or after it is acquired, so it often happens in a life of religion. A person who before his repentance was proud, will, after he has become religious, often insensibly grow to be self-confiding,

or self-complacent; soft people become vain or unreal; selfish people become isolated and unsympathising. The sap of the old stock rises into the graft, and lowers the quality of the fruit. Most of our religious difficulties are old faults with new faces, working now upon the desires, relations, and objects of faith, as before upon those of the world.

Or again: through infirmity we may fall into faults entirely new, from which, in times of less religion, we were wholly free. For instance: sometimes those who before they were awakened to a sense of their personal danger were

easy and indiscriminate, become almost schismatical in their abandonment of old and even religious friends: others who were formerly humble become opinionated and contentious, thinking it a duty to testify, as they say; that is, to thrust their own change upon the consciousness and senses of all about them. It is easy to see how soon pride and anger may spring up in such cases.

Self-seeking.

THIS habit of mind, while it satisfies the external demands of the Church, and ministers to our inward happiness, absolutely extinguishes all that ever produced any great work in Christ's service. It stunts the whole spirit at the standard of self; and makes all a man's thoughts and powers minister and submit themselves to his own aim and purpose. It makes a man live in himself and for himself, and bound

himself about by his own horizon. He will be devoted and earnest just so far as he may without trenching upon the comfort of his own life. He will pray, and fast, and give alms, and witness for the truth, just so far, and just so long, as shall involve him in no austerity, or weariness, or self-denial, or loss of popularity. He stands well with the world; he is not censured by the Church;—what more is necessary? So men tamper with the edge of conscience, and turn its keenness. Even they that have higher yearnings, and pulses that beat for nobler deeds, sink back acquiescingly under the burden-

some traditions of our easy life. Little by little their sympathies with high aspiring minds are blunted; every thing that goes beyond their own habit is over-much; every thing that would by consequence break in upon some part of their blameless easy course is impossible. Oh, none are so hard to rouse to great works of faith as they. The reason is not mysterious. We need call up no seer to unravel the secret. It is simply this, "all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

The secret of that stupendous self-devotion which the saints of Christ in

all ages have manifested in the world is simply this: they set up the life of Christ their Lord before them. They believed it to be the only spiritual reality the world ever saw, and that all other patterns of life were cheats and shadows; from it they drew all maxims and rules of living; by it they tried all customs of mankind; what combined with it, they held fast; what clashed with it, they trampled under foot; they gazed upon it, and grew towards it; they fell down before it, and worshipped it; and when they arose, and turned from it upon the world, they knew not that they re-

flected its borrowed glory. They knew not why men followed them, and yet shrunk from them; why they resisted them, and yet gave way before them: and they were troubled, and went and hid themselves, and did their works in secret, and bade no man speak of them: and yet their words and deeds came abroad, and kindled others to a like devotion.

Delay.

MEN are ever beguiling themselves with the dream that they shall one day be what they are not now: they balance their present consciousness of a low worldly life, and of a mind heavy and dull to spiritual things, with the lazy thought that some day God will bring home to them in power the realities of faith in Christ. So men dream away their lives in pleasure, sloth, trade, or study. Who is there that has not at some time secretly indulged this sooth-

ing flattery, that the staid gravity of age, when youth is quelled, or the leisure of retirement, when the fret of busy life is over, or, it may be, the inevitable pains and griefs which are man's inheritance, shall one day break up in his heart the now sealed fountains of repentance, and make, at last, his religion a reality? Who has not allayed the uneasy consciousness of a meagre religion with the hope of a future change? Who has not thus been mocked by the enemy of man? Who has not listened, all too readily, to him who would cheat us of the hour that is, and of all the spiritual earnings

which faith makes day by day in God's service, stealing from us the present hour, and leaving us a lie in exchange? And yet, this present hour is all we have. To-morrow must be to-day before we can use it: and day after day we squander in the hope of a to-morrow: but to-morrow shall be stolen away too, as to-day and yesterday. It is *now* we must be penitent, *now* we must be holy; this hour has its duty, which cannot be done the next. There is no new coming of God with observation, to make the Gospel mightier over our stubborn hearts, or to bid His sacraments renew the unwilling and

indolent soul. The grace of the holy Spirit that was given this morning, if lost, is lost for ever. To-morrow may bring its own opportunities, but will not restore to-day's. The convictions of this hour, if unheeded, will never come back. God may send others, but these will be gone for ever.

The motions of God's Spirit are like the flowing of the tide, which, taken at the full, will lift us over every bar: tarry and lose them, and we may be stranded for ever.

There is a golden chain, a thread frail and delicate, by which He leads us on. If we hang back, the golden thread

may snap asunder, and we fall back into any measure of declension.

Let us beware, then, how we tarry and debate. Lingering is a provocation of God's patience. He would be loved and honoured by a free and filial service. All depends on a will ready and prompt to obey. Who knows what, by a single act of the will, you may gain or lose? You are, it may be, at the cross roads, where the ways part asunder,—the one to life eternal, the other to eternal death. What you do will leave its character in the book of God's remembrance. As we choose, so we shall be. Our

will is our whole being summed into one intense, deliberate act. Resist the Spirit of God and you may be cast out of our Father's sight; follow, and you shall be His sons, by grace, for ever.

Haltings.

SOMETIMES when people have clearly decided in their own minds on the better course, they will not act upon the decision. This is the state of many. It is a cheap thing to know what is right; to make right decisions; even to resolve. The trial is in the act. Many die in their sins, for want of moral earnestness to break them off. A weak will is their perdition. But

there is even a sadder case than the end of those who never begin to act upon their faith. There are some who make a struggle, and for a while set themselves free, and seem to make their choice for ever. After a time they waver; and after wavering, go back. But they are never as they were before. As a stream, checked by a momentary dam, bursts with greater vehemence; so it is for the most part with relapsing Christians. They go back ach man to his particular sin, with a harder boldness, and a sevenfold greater abandonment of life and heart. Despised truth deadens

the conscience; and light departs from those who will not follow it. The darkness of a relapsed soul is of all the greatest.

Instability.

KNOWING without obeying is worse than in vain. It inflicts a deep and lasting injury upon the powers of our spiritual nature. Even in the hardest of men, a knowledge of Christianity produces an effect upon the conscience and the heart. It excites in a man certain convictions and emotions, and these are mysterious gifts of God; they are the first movements of the moral powers that are within us, the first impulse to set us in motion towards God. It is by these inward

strivings that knowledge brings a man to repentance and to eternal life. But they are only movements and impulses —means to a further end, and good in so far as they attain that end. In their own nature they are most transitory: they can be prolonged only by issuing in obedience, and thereby settling into principle; or, if they issue in nothing, by keeping up a perpetual succession of the same excitements. Now here is the peril of habitually listening to truths which we habitually disobey. Every time we hear them, they goad the conscience, and stir the heart; but every time with a lessened

force, and, as it were, with a blunter edge;—not, indeed, that they can lose aught of their own power and keenness, but because the often-excited mind grows languid and dull; the passive powers of the mind wear out, as the ear seems to lose all hearing of familiar sounds, or as a pampered palate is vitiated and its functions destroyed. So it is with men who from their baptism have been familiar with the mysteries of Christ. In childhood, boyhood, manhood, the same sounds of warning, and promise, and persuasion, the same hopes and fears, have fallen on a heedless ear, and a still

more heedless heart: they have lost their power over the man; he has acquired a settled habit of hearing without doing. The whole force of habit—that strange mockery of nature—has reinforced his original reluctance to obey; and long familiarity with truth makes it all the harder to recognise,—as the faces of those we most intimately know are often less distinct in our memory than those we have seen but seldom, and therefore noted all the more exactly.

It is a sad thought when we reflect for how short a time we retain the posture of mind which was wrought

in us by our last day of fasting, or our last act of self-examination. For a time, we were bowed under the Eternal Will, and awed by a sense of God's nearness, and a sight of our own sullied hearts: for a time, all the faults of our inferior nature were so held in check, that we seemed to be set free from their oppression; our better self rose to the surface, and maintained its ascendency: we were drawn into harmony with the secret order of His spiritual kingdom; all things, even the most adverse and chastening, seemed to us to be good; we were willing to be disposed of by Him,

though it should cost us all we had been longing for in life. Again, in times of great affliction, when by acts of self-humiliation, and pondering over the tokens of His purpose, we have brought ourselves to a calm, submissive state, so as to feel, as well as know, that if we had chosen for ourselves, we should have chosen amiss, and that our piercing sorrows are the last hope of breaking us into obedience, the necessary means of winning for us a crown in heaven;—it is sad to see how quickly these pure and blessed thoughts, with their fresh and vivid feelings, are blown away like the morn-

ing dew. So great is the change, that we seem to be other men.

We must seek to have the inward life of the Church in ourselves: it is not by loud profession of the faith, nor by headlong zeal for truth, nor by eager controversies against error, nor by excited devotions; but by a silent and even life of faith and purity, by a patient following of Christ's holy footsteps, by a mastery of temper, by mortifying self, by a steady gaze on His mysterious passion, by being, and praying Him to make us, like Himself, that we shall bear within us the kingdom and the presence of God.

Scruples.

SINCERE and humble minds often give way to fears at the clearer insight into their own sinfulness. It is a depth which we can hardly bear to look into. They who know the most of it know but little. There are two things which man cannot see and live, the Divine Majesty and his own sin. God in His tenderness veils us from ourselves, lest we should see ourselves, and die. Therefore it is not to be

wondered at, if earnest and self-searching minds should, by poring into their sinfulness, at last prey upon themselves. They do it with a pure intention, and with a zealous hatred of sin. The more keenly they hate evil, the less they spare themselves. It is a zeal which eateth them up. And they continually mourn over some golden age which is past; some season when all was fair and bright; when they think they were less soiled and darkened, and God was more sensibly about them. But this, indeed, is not the truth. They were always what they are, only they knew not then what

they know now. There has been no change, except in their consciousness of sin. What then slumbered is now awakened; all the change that has passed on them has been, not for the worse, but for the better: when they were unconscious of their sin, they were further from God; they are nearer now, because they see themselves to be exceeding sinful. It is He who is revealing it to them: it is His very nearness which awakens their consciousness. And they see not His light, but their own shadow, and this affrights them.

Now, for such persons, it is most

necessary that they should be drawn out of themselves.

The first counsel to be given them is, to clear their mind of scruples. But this is their very disease. It is from this they desire to be set free. If they could clear their mind, then they would have no further trouble. They must begin, then, by searching out and clearly defining the cause of their scruples. If it be indulged faults, or favoured infirmities, or conscious omissions, or known unfairness with their conscience, or unresisted temptation, or willing indevotion, then let them confess it simply and clearly

at the foot of the cross. Only let them guard against indulging in undefined and vague discomforts. We all know what it is to feel that something is vexing us, even while we cannot remember what it is; we feel ill at ease, and yet cannot tell why; it takes some moments' recollection to recall it; but the burden and sadness abide still upon us, though the causes are forgotten. It is just so in spiritual things; and needs to be much watched against.

Imperfect Faith.

THE duty of believing the whole and perfect truth is still absolutely binding on pain of sin to all who know it. In one sense there is no greater or less among truths, for all are true, and all come from God. As with the law, so with the faith; he that shall keep the whole faith, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all. One authority runs through all and is in all—the authority of God. All truths, indeed, are not in one sense alike; for instance,

the articles of the Creed and the history of the Apostles; but all are true, and divine faith receives all. To reject any is to offend against the revelation of the Holy Spirit. And this includes the whole divine order of the Church. Our Lord, when He sent the Apostles to baptise and make disciples, bade them teach men to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. The apostolic mission, therefore, had in it not only doctrines but sacraments, rules, and institutions; that is, it was a faith, worship, ritual, polity, government,—a visible kingdom, having order, power, and unity. In all and

through all, as one inseparable whole, the Divine authority dwells and rules. Truth, therefore, in the Church is one, perfect, absolute, and binding; admitting no diminution or addition, election or choice. It is all contained in the baptismal creed, as is all the law of sanctity in the ten commandments, not expressly, but by deep implication; and the authority on which we receive both is one—the Church teaching in the name of Christ. Be it once clear that so Christ has spoken in His Church, as well in the least as in the greatest we are bound.

Hardness of heart.

IT is one of the miserable effects of the loss of love to God, that sins are not naturally hateful to us. We commit them readily, and alas, eagerly, from our childhood; with no sensible pain, but with a fearful delight. If we loved God, every sin, even in thought, would be as a drop of molten lead: it would sear and pierce us with anguish. But through our sinfulness it is to us as the droppings of the honeycomb. And as we early begin

to sin, so we lose the little fear which, at first, came over us. We get to sin freely and easily, and to form a ready habit, which grows into a second nature, and passes into the unconscious emotions of our minds. What we have done from childhood, we grow even to believe to be right, or at least not wrong; to be venial, or to be indifferent; or what is more likely, by custom we lose the consciousness of what we do; and so go on unawares in things which make others tremble; and, if we could do them now for the first time, would make us stand aghast.

The way back to life. God's awakenings.

BY our fallen state, the will is of itself inclined to evil. It is in bondage to its own evil. It can no more release itself than water can stand as a wall, or a dry rod shoot with blossoms. The law of its fallen nature is to incline to evil, as the law of fire is to ascend in flame. By nature, then, our will is both free, and not free;

freely enslaved, and yet without power to unchain itself. And this the Spirit of Christ does for us. He makes sin fearful, terrible, bitter, and hateful, till the will shrinks from it, as we draw back from a searing fire. He reveals in our soul, the hideousness and deadliness of evil, till we tremble at it, and are willing to tear ourselves away from its allurements. But this willingness in itself is impotent. Left to ourselves we should be in bondage still. The sin that dwells in us belongs to our very nature, because it is fallen; so that when we have received a better will we need the power to be free.

We have power to bind ourselves, but not to loose; for when we have put on the fetter, there is another hand which turns the bolt, and by ourselves we can loose it no more. But the Spirit who gave us our new birth is God. Before Him all bonds fall off.

We see here how light sometimes forces itself upon such people. God sends to them a witness and a warning. Sickness, danger, the loss of those they love, worldly adversity, such as ruin of fortune, disappointments, and the like:—these things make them look deeper than the surface. They find the world's religion to be an im-

posture, a conspiracy to keep up a decent appearance, and to keep out the stern reality of the Cross. Little by little they begin to see that ease, glitter, smoothness, comfort, a free life, a fair opinion of themselves, are not the signs of Christ's servants; that in such things there are no tokens of the Crucifixion. These are not the array of repentance, nor fit trappings for fallen sinners. They begin, therefore, to doubt the truth of their past self-persuasion; they begin to see that their active thoughts and powers are bestowed with a fearful concentration upon this world, and that God

and His kingdom are but faintly remembered: that their prayers and repentance are not states and habits, but momentary acts or feelings. Their whole life of private devotion, perhaps, would not fill one hour in the twenty-four. Whatever is right, this must be wrong. New truths then begin to glimmer,—old truths, long slighted, to break out full upon them. They see enough to convince them that they cannot go on as in time past; that they have been walking in a vain show; that their religion has been a dream, and that the world has been their reality; and that this

is an open contradiction of Divine Truth; for "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Repentance and Conversion.

IT may be truly said, that His kingdom is founded on those who accuse themselves. They are its true and enduring foundations. When all empty and false Christians shall pass away, they shall be found united to Him Who is eternal. The kingdom of Christ descends from heaven to earth, having three distinct companies united

in one fellowship: those who are with Him on high, sinless and unfallen, that is, holy angels, who never sinned; another, fallen, but sinless now, the spirits of just men made perfect; the third, still on earth, fallen and sinful, but repenting, kneeling at the foot of the cross, and accusing themselves before Him night and day. Such is His Kingdom: part in heaven now, arrayed in white, and crowned; part waiting upon earth, in sackcloth and penance still. This is the Church visible on earth, the congregation of the faithful, that is, of the baptised. But baptism is an outward grace, which unites

penitent and impenitent in one; repentance is an inward bond, which unites none but His true servants. And of repentance there is one unbending and absolute condition—a true self-accusation at the feet of Jesus Christ. There is no exemption from this law. Baptism without repentance avails nothing, and repentance without self-accusation is impossible. In the midst of the visible Church He numbers, by direct intuition, the fellowship of true penitents. In them He dwells, and to them He listens. He has no communion with those who do not know their need of His absolving pity.

This law of repentance is laid on all, even on the greatest saints: it often seem to press more heavily on them than on others; for as they have more sanctity, they have more of love; and as they have more of love, they have more of sorrow. As the light rises upon them, they see more clearly their own deformities. It is the greatest light of sanctity that reveals the least motes of evil; as things imperceptible in the common light of day float visible in the sunbeam.

This warning is for all. It was spoken absolutely. To all mankind, as fallen men, the way of life is not

more blessed than it is arduous. There must pass on each a deep and searching change. And this change, though it be wrought *in* us of God, is wrought *through* our striving. It is no easy task to gird up the energies of our moral nature to a perpetual struggle. The most watchful feels as one that strives against the half-conscious drowsiness of an oppressive poison; the purest, as he that leaves upon driven snow a dark and sullying touch; the most aspiring, as a man that aims his shafts from a straitened and slackened bow; the most hopeful of eternal life, as one that toils for a far shore in a

rolling and stormy sea. It is a hard thing to be a Christian. It is a hard thing to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. It is a hard thing to force our way, making an armed retreat into a position of safety; for sin, that great and manifold mystery of ill, whose root no man hath ever found, whose goings forth were before the world was made, whose legions are unseen, hovers around with a terrible strength, and still more terrible craft. It ever hangs upon our skirts, and harasses our way to life; it waits through every day, and watches in every hour; it besets all our paths, and lurks beside all our

duties; it mingles in our toils, and hides in our secret chamber, and masks itself under our religion, and follows us to the altar of God. Through all this we have to win our way to life. These throng the way to life, and cast down the unwary, and overbear the wavering soul, and mar the beginnings of repentance: therefore are they who find eternal life but few.

Self-accusation.

SELF-ACCUSATION is the test which separates between true and false repentance. Among the members of the visible Church, the faithful and unfaithful may be, for the most part, easily distinguished by their open and manifest lives; yet among the seemingly faithful, it is not always easy to discern the truly converted from those who have never in heart turned to God. Many seem to others, and to

themselves, to be faithful Christians, who have little penitence; and many are believed, and believe themselves, to be penitents, who have never truly repented. The one only sure discerning test is the spirit of self-accusation. It is essential that we should use a moral diligence, that is, a sincere, careful, and leisurely attention to remember and to recount the sins of our past life and of our present state. It is plain, indeed, that no man can recall the whole tissue and train of his past life; no human memory can store it up, no human consciousness can sustain it. Therefore it is enough

that we confess all we can remember, according to these three rules.

First, the *kind* of our sins: not in vague general terms, such as, "I am proud," or "I am angry," and the like; but specifically accusing ourselves of the instances in which we have so offended.

Secondly, we must confess the *number* of our sins: not strictly every act, but morally; that is, whether they have been *isolated* events, or *frequent* and *habitual*.

And lastly, the *circumstances* which may change the character or aggravate the sinfulness of what we have

done: as, for instance, the *persons* against whom we have offended; for an act of disrespect is far guiltier if committed against a parent than against an indifferent person: and the *time;* for sins derive a peculiar character from the season; as, if we sinned after great warnings, or in the midst of great blessings or chastisements. And again, the *manner,* that is, whether deliberately, and with mature intentions; for even lesser sins have greater guilt when they are committed with slighter outward temptation, and therefore with stronger inward sinfulness; or whether against motives to

forbear; or persisted in after the moment of temptation, by the obstinacy of a perverse heart. These plain rules will be enough for a sincere heart; for where the will is right, rules are but little needed.

Sorrow for Sin.

THE true source of this self-accusing spirit is love. A heart once touched by the love of Christ no longer strives to hide its sin, or to make it out to be but little. To excuse, palliate, or lighten the guilt even of a little sin grates upon the whole inward sense of sorrow and self-abasement. "Against Thee, Thee only," is the language of true penitents. The wrong done to

God and the hardness towards our crucified Lord are their chief motives to repentance. They have no peace but in laying their sins to their own charge. The remembrance of sin makes them to feel ungenerous and heartless. They have nothing left but to turn accusers of themselves; to take part against themselves before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ. They come with a forward and earnest will, to lay open their own grief, and to bear their own shame; for in their conscience there is a presence which opens them from within. Their sorrow is not turbulent, clouded, and un-

quiet, as the sorrow of self-justifying minds when they are detected and reproved, but gentle and soft, with a brightness even in its shadows. It is a sadness which humbles and sanctifies, making the will pliant, and even the words of self-accusing to be sweet.

Confession of Sin.

ALL that the Absolver demands of us is, that we kneel down before Him and condemn ourselves. What miracles of Divine compassion are working day by day! Throughout His whole Church on earth the Blood of atonement is perpetually descending,—sins are perpetually blotted out for ever, hearts cleansed for eternity. But if a person shall say, "I know what my trouble is,

and what it springs from; and I have confessed it again and again, and yet I cannot find peace. I feel sure something is amiss. I cannot assure myself, and be at rest." Then theirs is exactly the case intended and described by the Church. "If any man cannot quiet his own conscience," let him come to some minister of God, and open his grief. The best course for such persons is, simply to follow the Church's counsel: to go to their pastor, confess their trouble in the presence of Christ and in the hearing of his servant, and receive the benefit of absolution. Then let it be a point of faith with them to

trouble themselves no more. Let them simply "believe the word that Jesus has spoken, and go their way."

His absolution from sin is as necessary to all penitent and self-accusing sinners now as it was then, and ever will be to the end of the world. And He has not ceased to dispense it. The very same full and divine power of absolving all who accuse themselves is in His Church now, and shall be till He comes again. The ministry of reconciliation is always at work; the blood of the Good Shepherd is ever being applied to the souls for whom He died.

Prayer.

THERE is something at first sight paradoxical in saying, that prayer is the beginning of conversion to God, and also the highest token of perfection. Yet so it is. Prayer is the very breath of the regenerate life. Without it no spirit of man can live. Prayer is also the nearest approach to the work of saints unseen, to the heavenly glory, to the beatific vision.

Of all the spiritual powers of the regenerate soul, it is the highest and most nearly akin to perfection. It is no less than speaking with God under a consciousness of His presence, with kindled desires, and a submitted will. It implies the presence and energy of faith, love, and repentance. Such as we are, such our prayers will be.

One thing it is safe to say: we ought all of us to be longer on our knees before God than we are at present. And longer we should be, if we truly knew our own state, or if we had so much as a moment's clear perception of the awfulness of God's presence, or

of the bliss of perfect prayer. This at least may be said, that to hurry suddenly into His presence, and to hurry out of it again, is no sign of our so much as understanding the first idea of worship. Our prayers cannot fail to be full of distraction, if we enter upon them without first setting ourselves, by acts of conscious recollection, in His presence. Another practical rule is this: we may be sure that we do not give time enough to prayer so long as either the ordinary habits of our life continue to thrust themselves in upon our devotions, or our habits of devotion fail to check and sanctify the or-

dinary habits of our life. Till we reach this point, we shall be in no danger of giving too much time to our prayers; and that is a sufficient and a safe practical answer, and a good rule to go by.

Self-Denial.

WITHOUT crossing and denying ourselves, there can be no purifying of the moral habits. Without true compunction and a tender conscience, purity of heart, and the energy of a devout mind set free from the thraldom of evil, no man can have fellowship with Christ; and no man can have these without self-denial. A man must either deny

or indulge himself. There is no middle or indifferent state—for the not denying is indulgence; it is throwing the reins on the neck of his lusts, though he may lack boldness to set the spur; it is rather the want of self-denial, than any conscious and deliberate purpose of sinning, that solves the case of most habitual sinners.

He is in great peril of judgment who never forgoes any thing that he might lawfully enjoy. He that lives on a dubious boundary-line, trusting his own stedfastness, is ever ready to slip over into a transgression. More men perish by exceeding in the measure of

lawful things than in deliberate commission of things forbidden. It is a perilous footing on the giddy edge of a precipice.

Fasting.

WITH us, however, fasting is a means of humiliation, abasement, repentance for the guilt of sins committed, and for the soils of sin which penetrate our inmost soul. To us sinners it is a sharp and necessary medicine to cleanse our hearts, to waken and excite devotion, to chasten and clear the spiritual affections towards God, and to humble our natural pride. These are

its first and obvious uses. It also helps to form in us a pure and unselfish sympathy with the suffering members of Christ, in their patience and necessities, in their faintness and heavy toil, in the languor of sickness and feebleness of age. It is good for us to see our tables spread like a poor man's board; for many go from their birth to their grave and never know the taste of hunger. There are secrets of suffering into which not only the rich and soft, but even the charitable and pitiful, can never enter, except by self-denials, of which fasting is an example and a pledge.

Recollection.

OUR life is too continually outward and visible, and pent up in the throng of men. We are not enough at large and alone with God. Solitude and silence are full of reality. We must draw more into our own hearts, and converse more with Him. Never do we so put off the paint and masquerade of life, as when we are alone under the Eye which seeth in secret. All that

we can do, when we find ourselves grown artificial and excited, is to go apart, where none but God sees us, and fall down as dust and nothingness before Him, and plead with Him against ourselves, and pray Him to abolish in us all that is not real and eternal.

The Law of our Life.

THIS, then, is our law of life in this confused and perilous world. It will be good to try ourselves daily by this rule. The first thing in the morning, offer all your intentions and all the works of the day to God. During the day, renew this intention by intervals of prayer, or by momentary aspirations. Before you begin any new work, ask,— "Am I doing this for His name? Can

I do this in His sight? Will He accept this as done for His sake? Can I ask His blessing upon it? Can I offer it up to Him?" If you are met by difficulties, renew the consciousness for Whom you are at work. If tempted to impatience or to anger, or to resentment, say this holy Name in secret to yourself. If you suffer, call to mind, "This I suffer for Him who suffered all for me. This is my cross for His sake, the shadow of His cross for mine." Be it sickness, pain, anguish, anxiety, sorrow, solitude, it is all one; we may join it to His sorrows and to the darkness of His Cross. In this you will

find consolation, strength, guidance, ever fresh and ever near. This will keep your feet in all your ways, be they never so slippery, be they never so strait. His Name, through faith in His Name, shall hold you up. In a little while, where will be all the things that we are fretting about? Where will be honours, wealth, power, ambition, high place, science, learning, pleasures, and refinement? Where will be home and its soft cares, its keen anxieties, its tender affections, its blinding attachments? Where will all these be, when the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in heaven?

Live, then, in obedience to that great law which binds heaven and earth in one. All things on high worship Him; to Him all things in earth and under the earth bow the knee. The Name of Jesus is the law of angels, archangels, principalities, and powers; it is the healing of penitents, the song of God's elect. Be it your motive and your law, and it shall be your strength and stay; your shield, and your exceeding great reward.

J. HODGES, PRINTER, FROME.

Sixpenny Library continued:—

Vol. 1,

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

300 Pages.

Opinions of the Press on Vol. 1.

"Mr. Hodges deserves the thanks of all Churchmen for having brought out a complete copy of the Imitation of Christ, by Thomas A Kempis, for sixpence. It is well printed on good paper and bound in a cloth wrapper. The work is well translated and edited, and merits a wide circulation. It is the first of a series which promises to be a great success."—*Church News.*

"It is of course superfluous for us to say how earnestly we must desire to see such an attempt successful. But it may not be superfluous for us to urge upon our readers that they do their parts in promoting its circulation. Think of the 'Imitatio' and 'Spiritual Combat' for sixpence! And think also what a blessing it would be if even a fair proportion of our communicants were habitually using such books!" — *Literary Churchman.*

"Complaints were made some time ago through our own column of the dearness of

Opinions of the Press on Vol. 1 *continued:—*

Church publications. Let us impress upon Churchmen the duty of supporting this attempt to provide first-rate publications, at a cheap price. Only a very large sale will justify a continuance of the scheme. We may think ourselves well off with an edition so thoroughly readable as this at sixpence. 'The Spiritual Combat' we see is on the list of future publications. Again we say it will be a crying shame if this most praiseworthy scheme dies from want of support. If it does die, let no one henceforth complain of publisher's prices."—*Church Review.*

Vol. 2,

THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT.
Now Ready.

Vol. 3,

AN EASY EXPLANATION OF THE APOSTLES' CREED. In the Press.

In preparation :—

FENELON'S COUNSELS OF PERFECTION and on HOLY COMMUNION.

Sixpenny Library continued:—

A DAILY TEXT BOOK FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES INTRODUCTION TO A DEVOUT LIFE, &c., &c.

—§—

THREE TALES for an IDLE HOUR: LIONEL HARCOURT, PETER BARRET'S LODGER, MARY SINCLAIR. Price 2s.

"Will be a great favourite with young people, and might with profit and amusement be read more carefully than its title denotes."—*John Bull.*

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES. Two Short Stories by the Author of "Willie Grey, the Young Orphan," the "Great Rock Ahead," &c. Price 4d.

ELLEN'S BAPTISM; or, "Do let me be Christened." A Story founded upon fact. By the author of "Easy Readings from the history of England." Price 6d.

Our Curate's Budget.

Edited by the Rev. WILLIAM MICHELL, M.A.

The following numbers, for 1865-66-67-68 are now ready, price 3d. each.

No. 1 —Tom Edwards.
No. 2 —My Two Sick Friends.
No. 3 —True-Hearted, Long-parted.
No. 4 —Black Brian.
No. 5 —Ben, the Barge Boy.
No. 6 —The New Vicar.
No. 7 —The Two Baptisms.
No. 8 —Sister's Children.
No. 9 —Susan's First Place.
No. 10—St. Michael's.
No. 11—William Baird.
No. 12—Blue Anchor Yard.
No. 13—Ash-tree Turnpike.
No. 14—Agatha's Working Day.
No. 15—The Broad-lane Tea Party.
No. 16—The Crofton Cricket Club.
No. 17—Dismissed from the Choir.
No. 18—Fustian Jenny.
No. 19—Harry Mason's Repentance.
No. 20—Cloud and Sunshine.
No. 21—Silver or Pewter.
No. 22—William Fisher's Lesson.
No. 23—An Old Score.
No. 24—Out of his Time.
No. 25—Gilbert Lorimer's Vow.

Our Curate's Budget continued:—

No. 26—Martin's Common.
No. 27—So Very Genteel.
No. 28—Peppery Mike.
No. 29—Mary's Sacrifice.
No. 30—Coals of Fire.
No. 31—A Dangerous Gift.
No. 32—Better than Rubies.
No. 33—A Changeful Life.
No. 34—Time Enough.
No. 35—The Miller of Basildon.
No. 36—The Stranger at Heathcote.
No. 37—From Treble to Tenor.
No. 38—Old Molly.
No. 39—Gentlefolks Once.
No. 40—Husband and Wife.
No. 41—The Dictation Prize.

The following numbers are suited for Boys:— 1, 5, 7, 12, 27, 19, 21, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37 and 41.

Young Men:—4, 11, 13, 16, 22, 24 and 20.

Girls and Young Women :— 3, 9, 14, 27, 29, 30 and 32.

Church Work and Doctrine :— 2, 6, 8, 15 and 38.

General:—10, 18, 23, 26, 33, 35, 36, 39 and 40.

Also in Quarterly Series 1 to 14, limp cloth, 1s. each.

Half-yearly Vols. 1 to 6, cloth, 2s. each.

Yearly Vols. 1865-66-67. Cloth, Full Gilt, 4s. 6d. each.

Stories on the Festivals.

Complete in 25 Nos. at 2d. each;
4 packets at 1s. each; or handsomely bound, gilt edges, 5s. 6d.

Ned's Influence—for the Feast of S. Andrew
Doubtful Jem—Feast of S. Thomas.
Holly Leaves—Feast of Christmas.
No Cross, No Crown—Feast of S. Stephen.
What is a Martyr?—S. John the Evangelist.
Hugh's Cross—Feast of the Holy Innocents.
A Sad New Year—Feast of the Circumcision.
Light in Darkness—Feast of the Epiphany.
Meg's Conscience—Feast of S. Paul.
Watching and Waiting—for the Purification.
Self-Denial—Feast of S. Matthias.
Beatrice Lindsay's Wish—For the Annunc.
Lonely Tim—Feast of S. Mark Evangelist.
The Three May Days—S. Philip S. James.
The Deferred Confirmation—Ascension Day.
A Son of Consolation—Feast of S. Barnabas.
Whitecliff Shop—Feast of S. John Baptist.
Hero Jack—Feast of S. Peter.
The Baptism of Tears—Feast of S. James.
Harry's Trouble—Feast of S. Bartholomew.
Sally's Bonnet—Feast of S. Matthew.
Widow Blunt's Boy—S. Michael All Angels.
The Forger's Wife—Feast of S. Luke.
The Young Heir—S. Simon and S. Jude.
Ethel's Grave—Feast of All Saints.